

Post office may remove some boxes

By MARK EDDINGTON
The Daily Herald

Rain, sleet or snow may not interfere with mail service in Provo, but the number of collection boxes might.

That's because officials at the Provo post office want to reduce the amount of time mail carriers spend picking up letters from collection boxes.

Since Nov. 1, the post office has been installing computer chips in collection boxes to monitor the daily volume of mail. Robert Vunder, acting Provo postmaster, will decide at the first of the year which of them get enough use to remain in place.

Boxes with inadequate usage or that are near busier collection points could be removed, meaning some apartment and condominium dwellers may have to walk farther to mail a letter.

"We're looking at it from a cost-effectiveness and business standpoint," said Robert Vunder, acting Provo postmaster. "So I'm evaluating the collection boxes, but we haven't pulled any yet."

But Provo apartment owners and managers near Brigham Young University see it from another viewpoint. They, like every other taxpayer,

pay taxes to fund the U.S. Postal Service, and they believe their tenants deserve the same level of service as anyone else.

"I'm upset about it and tenants

are upset about it," said Aaron Mendenhall, resident manager of the Campus Plaza apartments a block south of the university.

Mendenhall said the post office has already served notice that it intends to remove Campus Plaza's box for outgoing mail on Dec. 10. He said that means tenants will have to either

mail their letters at a small and consistently full box several blocks away or even farther away at the BYU Post Office in the Wilkinson Center.

Norman Nelson, who manages

Liberty Square Apartments at 556 N. 400 East, said his 800 tenants would have to walk to Heaps Brick Oven to mail a letter if the complex's collection box is removed. Tenants in large neighboring apartment complexes already use Liberty Square's box.

"If they take out our box, we have got one big problem," he said.

But Vunder said apartment owners are overreacting. He maintains his evaluation will show that most boxes at apartment complexes have sufficient volume to remain in place. Those that don't, he added, have another within easy walking distance.

Vunder said eliminating boxes also removes the hours it takes to collect from them. By paring the number of collection boxes, he hopes to eliminate one carrier posi-

MAIL:

(Continued from Page B1)

tion. He said apartment owners upset by the move should remember they can always have outgoing letters picked up by carriers delivering mail to their incoming box.

But that's not what Campus Plaza was told. Mendenhall said post office officials told him Campus Plaza's collection box bearing the "U.S. Mail" logo was a collectors item — one they did not want to be responsible for.

Mendenhall said Campus Plaza management was informed that if they buy their own unmarked box to replace the current one, the post office will put a lock on it and continue to collect mail. He said management was told this would absolve U.S. Postal Service employees of legal responsibility for lost or stolen mail, as well as spare them the expense of installing a computer chip to monitor the volume of letters.

"If they are going to pick up the mail anyway, why not leave the old box?" he asked. "Why not install the chip in the box? It doesn't make sense to me."

Nelson believes the extra work load entailed by mail collection at Liberty Square is minuscule. He said it takes three minutes for the letter carrier to collect the mail from the box outside his office.

"You can't get more efficient than that," he said.

(See MAIL, Page B2)

Axtell keeps post office — of sorts

By Reed L. Madsen 7-7-97
Deseret News correspondent

AXTELL, Sanpete County — It's a post office and yet it isn't. It provides services, but not many. And it still retains its identity with a zip code.

People pick up their mail at the "post office," but they can't buy stamps, and the U.S. Postal Service describes the little outpost in this unincorporated farming community as "officially closed."

Once probably the smallest post office in Utah, it now plays the role of only a "partial post office." The small building is attractively painted, nestled between a couple of large trees alongside the highway. There's a well-kept postal sign at the side of the single door, and zip code 84621 is prominently displayed above it.

After years of squabbling by Axtell residents with Postal Service officials, a unique situation developed.

They still get their mail from boxes inside the building and the site is still a place for them to meet and visit daily, discussing the latest news, gossip and area happenings.

But they can't mail packages or buy stamps because there is no window service.

"It has gone through the review process in Washington, D.C., and they have allowed us to officially close it, so it no longer exists as an official post office," said Charlie Wright, post office operations manager for southern Utah, whose office is in Salt Lake City.

"We have a way of delivering it (mail) to them in that building but there is no longer a postmaster in Axtell," he said.

The mail is delivered daily under a contract with Robert Edwards, who operates the community post office in nearby Centerfield, Wright said. Kathy Newby, postal administrator in the town of Redmond, is responsible for maintaining the appearance of the building. She does it admirably.

But Axtell residents haven't been left out in the cold as far as services that are generally conducted through the windows of a full-fledged post office.

"We are providing them with envelopes for stamps by mail," Wright explained. "They can put their check inside the envelope and we will deliver the stamps to them the next day. So we are really trying to make it convenient."

The announcement several months ago by postal officials that the Axtell post office would close raised the ire of residents who tied the tiny community's identity to



Residents can still pick up their mail and order stamps at the tiny post office in Axtell, but the facility no longer has a postmaster.

the post office and didn't want to lose it. Other changes had not been decided at the time.

At first, it was suggested residents would have to go to Gunnison or Redmond for retail services. "I realize that with change there is always concern," Wright said in a letter posted at the tiny post office. Then the local stamp-purchase concept was devised.

He said closure of the post office had been considered by postal authorities for several years. He then promised residents would be contacted to further explain the status of the post office. The "post office that isn't but is" was the result.

Among the options considered was clustered mailboxes. "But the community wanted to keep that building," Wright said. "Rather than give them those silver . . . we call them neighborhood boxes . . . that go out on the curb with locked compartments . . . they wanted to

keep that building because it gives their community identity. That's the reason we kept the building under lease."

A lack of revenue was the cause for the official closing.

For example, revenue in 1991 was only \$5,863, with expenses of \$17,132. Most of that was for a postmaster salary, but two years later the postmaster retired, and that cut expenses.

There were some increases in revenue, the highest at \$17,795 in fiscal year 1994. But it was concluded that a woman who worked in Gunnison had used the Axtell post office for most of her employer's postal business.

Wright said there were a few complaints when the change first occurred, with inexperienced people having to learn the customer names. "But I haven't had any complaints for nine or 10 months."

U.S. Postal Service will deliver in France this July

TOUR DE FRANCE

Lake cyclist, is invited.

Associated Press

6-28-97

PARIS — The U.S. Postal Service team, with a Russian as one of the leaders, will be only the second American-based squad to participate in the Tour de France.

"We are not going to France just to participate. We will be a player throughout the race," team president Tom Weisel said after his squad gained a wild-card invitation for the race.

The world's top 16 teams are selected in January to compete in the annual event. Six remaining teams were given wild-card invitations based on their performances of this season.

The U.S. Postal Service team has won 27 races this season, including two stage victories each in the Paris-Nice, Catalane Week and Dauphine Libre, all multi-stage races leading to the Tour de France.

"Now that we have received an invitation to the Tour, our next goal is to win a stage and place as high as we can in the general classification," Wiesel said.

For more than 10 years, there have been Americans on the tour, either as individuals or as a U.S.-based team.

In 1986, Greg LeMond won the Tour de France for the first time and cycling was expected to boom in the United States. The American public became aware of European cycling, especially after LeMond's comeback from a hunting accident and dramatic last day win in 1989. He won his third the following year but faded after that.

There have been other Americans. Andy Hampsten won the Tour of Italy and helped LeMond in the mountains as a teammate one year.

Lance Armstrong won the one-day world title in 1993 and took two Tour de France stages, including an emotional one following the death of Motorola teammate Fabio Casartelli during a stage in the Pyrenees.

Now Armstrong is battling testicular cancer. After Motorola, formerly the 7-Eleven team, lost its sponsorship, Armstrong moved to the new French Cofidis team at a large salary.

After his announcement on the eve of last year's world championship that he had developed cancer, it looked unlikely for an American presence in this year's Tour.

Enter the U.S. Postal Service team, which was founded two years ago. Mark Gorski, the 1984 Olympic sprint gold medalist, is the team's director.

It has Tour de France veterans Vyacheslav Yekimov of Russia, Adriano Baffi of Italy and Jean-Cyril Robin of France.

Yekimov won a number of world track titles competing for the former Soviet Union.

There are Americans on the squad, too.

George Hincapie of Charlotte, N.C., is a 1996 Olympian and two weeks ago was the winner of the U.S. championships — for about 90 minutes. His title was taken away when officials ruled that he had been illegally paced back to the pack by his team's car after changing a flat tire.

Marty Jemison of Salt Lake City and Tyler Hamilton of Marblehead, Mass., will also be on the team for the Tour, which begins on July 5 in Rouen.

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Michael Blommer had a chance to put
Utah ahead about halfway through the
first half with a penalty kick of his own.
His shot, however, was smothered by Colo-
rado's keeper, ending one threat.

Several free kicks and fast breaks ended
in Sparta just missing. But all those near
misses cost Utah when Colorado headed a
free kick past Darius Neerings for a 2-1
lead with 10 minutes to play.

The U-14 Sparta United team had a
rough go of it as they dropped a 6-1 deci-
sion to a team from Colorado.

The Snickers Cup, a tournament that
saw more than 480 games played on 19
fields over the past week, wraps up today
with championship games in all age
groups. All championship games will be
played at West Jordan's Utah Youth
Sports Complex at 7800 South 4000 West.

By Marcos
Associated Pre

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would be nearly impossible. I think the
players are stronger and better ath-
letes. They are a lot taller so obviously
the power game will be predominant in
some matches."

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SHOP BETWEEN DROPS: The almost
constant rain this week at Wimbledon
has sent sales soaring at the three gift
shops here. Sales are expected to easily
top the predicted \$6.6 million for the
two weeks.

"Sales are up 50 percent this year,
partly because of the expanded area
and different facilities and partly be-
cause people haven't been able to see
tennis as a result of the rain," said Rob-
ert McCowen, marketing director of the
All England Club.

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WET OMEN: The last time two
straight days of play were washed out
at Wimbledon was 1909. That's good
news for Britons Tim Henman and
Greg Rusedski. That year the winner
was a Briton, Arthur Gore. The only
other time when two days were lost was

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By Steven Wi
AP sports writer

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